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ABSTRACT

Dimensions and perspectives of the external degree as a potential thrust for the University System of Georgia, are explored in this report. Emphasis is placed on a definition of terms, significant developments in the external degree movement, the scope of educational decisionmaking required in planning external degree programs, forces and influences affecting the external degree, and salient opportunities for improvement. Recommendations suggest: (1) The University System should mount a serious and consistent study and planning effort leading to the development and offering of one or more external degree programs. (2) Strategies and structures for planning and implementing programs must be carefully developed to synthesize interests and to reconcile divergent viewpoints. (3) A market survey and a review of the experience with programs should be undertaken. (4) The program should be designed to maintain and enhance quality standards. (5) Planning and implementation of the program should utilize input from a wide variety of resource people and specialists. (MJM)

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(SECOND WORKING DRAFT)

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Developing External Degree Program(s) in the University System of Georgia

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FOREWORD

The ad hoc subcommittee on the external degree defines its functions on the basis of information provided as follows:

To examine, on an exploratory basis, the dimensions and perspectives of the external degree as a potential thrust for the University System of Georgia and its constituent institutions and to recommend via the full ad hoc committee, the University System Committee on Public Services, and the University System Advisory Council (a) whether or not the University System should initiate the development of external degree(s), (b) if so, what are the viable options for their development, (c) what procedure is recommended for their development.

This interim report is based on a study of available literature on the external degree, the work of an earlier ad hoc committee from one of the institutions of the University System, and the consultation and assistance of faculty who have made in-depth studies of the external degree and observed first-hand the activities of many of the major programs now in operation. In addition, the subcommittee had the invaluable assistance of a representative advisory panel of administrators and faculty members from University System institutions.

It is hoped that the report will be considered as an orientation to the tasks that lie ahead, if the external degree is to be viewed as an opportunity not only to extend the services of higher education in Georgia but also to design programs of instruction characterized by vitality and quality relevant to the conditions of living in our times.

DIMENSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES OF THE EXTERNAL DEGREE AS A POTENTIAL FOR THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

The action of the College Delegate Assembly of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at its December, 1971 meeting adopting a revised Standard IX can be viewed as a watershed event marking a shift in emphasis in relation to hitherto distinctly secondary activities in higher education. Standard IX deals with "special activities" of institutions of higher education embracing historically such activities as extension classes, correspondence courses and the offerings of off-campus centers and branches of institutions of higher education: i.e., all educational programs offered off the campuses of institutions and outside the regular residential class schedules.

The decades since World War II have witnessed a rapid growth of such programs in scope, enrollments and variety of systems for their delivery, including among the latter such activities as conferences, short courses and workshops, foreign travel and study, and media-assisted instruction via radio, telephone, television and computer connection.

Prior to the adoption of the revised Standard, the general tone of previous versions was restrictive in nature, sharply limiting the amount of credit toward degrees that study through such means could earn. The tone of the revised Standard is quite different, moving from a restrictive to a positive tone as typified by the following key statement:

> The Commission does not wish to be restrictive on new special activities programs of a member institution but rather seeks to encourage innovation and an imaginative approach to providing quality instruction according to the educational needs of the college's constituents.
>
> (Standard IX, College Delegate Assembly of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 1971. p. 21)

Among the special activities so encouraged are the "external or special degree programs (non-traditional study). It should be noted that the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools does not, of course, require institutions to offer such programs and degrees. It recognizes them as appropriate activities for institutions whose study and planning justify their offering at their own discretion."

The Meaning of "External Degree"

The public press and higher education publications alike over the period of the last two years have published numerous news stories and articles about external degrees, the open university, special adult degree programs, and the like. These articles have dealt with a number of innovative degree programs which are being developed in this country and abroad. The Empire State College in New York

State, the Open University of England, and the Bachelor of Liberal Studies Degree program of the University of Oklahoma are all examples. The terminologies used represent various shades of emphasis which taken together indicate emerging practices which are collected under the general rubric of **external degree** or **non-traditional** studies. The clues to the practices involved lie in the modifiers "external," "open," "adult," and "non-traditional."

External

The use of the term "external" points to the locale of study and the consequent alternative modes of delivery of educational experience. In general the term external means study away from the residential campus of the institution so that literally the student can live at home and earn his degree without moving to a residential campus community for long periods of residence study. The modes of delivery of the educational experience to make this possible include, in a variety of possible combinations, independent study, or the more traditional correspondence study; extension classes in local communities within easy commuting distance of students; media-assisted study via film, television, radio, telephonic hook-ups, audio tapes, and programmed and computer assisted instruction; and relatively short periods of residential study on campus at conveniently scheduled intervals with independent study interspersed. In essence, the external delivery of educational experience to the point of earning a degree would require repeal of customary residence requirements which usually specify a minimum of one academic year of study on campus.

Open

The term "open" points to marked changes in admission requirements and procedures. In its broadest sense it implies non-restriction in admissions by using systems of testing and assessment of the prospective student on the basis of which he is counselled and placed in a program at the level of his demonstrated readiness; provision is made for him to pursue a degree from that point. Some of the announced programs will limit themselves to achievement assessment and the awarding of degrees and will not offer any instruction, leaving the applicant to study and learn from available resources wherever and in what modes he chooses.

Adult

The term "adult" points to the principal potential clientele for such programs. There is considerable difference of opinion as to the definition of an adult from an educational standpoint, and there is also an equal amount of difference of opinion as to whether or not such programs should be restricted to adults. There is considerable consensus of estimate that the vast majority of students who enroll in such programs will be people who are twenty-one years of age or older who already have major life responsibilities other than attending school. They will be full-time employed people, mothers with responsibilities for rearing children, retired people and the like. Some observers, however, believe these programs should be open to college-age youth who may find the programs more meaningful and the modes of study more congenial than traditional, residential campus study.

Non-Traditional

The term "non-traditional" points to the development of new types of programs leading to degrees: i.e., programs whose rationale, content, and organization are markedly different from those for degrees offered customarily on residential campuses. Some of these innovative programs are reactions against what is considered to be the extreme professionalism and specialization of existing programs and are attempts to recapture the values of a general education and the liberal studies. Other innovative curricula are hopeful attempts to make education more relevant to the conditions of contemporary life by emphasizing the development of competencies to apply knowledge to life activities. This is in reaction to alleged over-emphasis on acquisition of huge quantities of organized information related not to its utility in living but rather to the internal logic of the subject-matter disciplines themselves. Others may concentrate on occupational proficiency almost exclusively on the premise that the general education provided by the secondary schools is sufficient for many people.

In summary, the external degree program as considered by this subcommittee means programs of study, either traditional or non-traditional, offered primarily off-the-campus of the institutions generally but not necessarily exclusively, for adults, using one or a combination of available systems for delivering instruction and assessing student achievement, all so organized that students can live at home and earn degrees and certificates without spending long periods of continuous resident study on campus.

This discussion of terminology can best be illustrated by a brief description of some of the significant external degree programs now planned or in operation. The next section will describe some of these and discuss their implications for the improvement of higher education.

Significant Developments in the External Degree Movement

It is not a new notion that academic degrees should be awarded on the basis of demonstrated, comprehensive achievement rather than the accumulation of disparate course credits. Early in American education, school boards judged how well students could read, write, spell, and cypher before they promoted them to their next level of study. The British established the University of London in 1836 solely to examine students from lesser institutions for degrees. Coulter records that in the early 1800s one could not graduate from the University of Georgia without demonstrating before faculty and literary men of the state, often including the governor, a comprehensive grasp of the arts, literature, and sciences.

Once it is agreed that credit and degrees should be primarily, if not exclusively, awarded on the basis of demonstrated and consensually validated achievement, the means of reaching a given level of attainment become a matter of concern. Inevitably, much of the study necessary for such attainment is an individual matter. This does not at all refute the importance of colleague interaction. Stephen Leacock said that in establishing a new college, he would first have a smoking room and a dormitory and then if any money were left over he would hire a professor. That is to say that students learn through interacting with peers as well as with professors. In order to accommodate this approach to mass higher education, American colleges and universities have built and maintained large residence halls (1000 beds and larger). At the same time, non-residential urban universities and community colleges have been established. So while mass housing on residential campuses diminished the intimacy necessary for intellectual exchange, the non-residential campuses could really make little pretense for it at all. Given these current realities of American collegiate life, some observers believe that our efforts now must be to design programs of independent study for those aspects of the curriculum that are conducive to individualized study on one hand and to complement them with seminars that emphasize clarification and exploration on the other.

Given that exposure does not necessarily equal attainment, that attainment ought to be credited without regard to how it is acquired, and that so much of present-day higher education is actually a matter of independent study, there is now a growing effort to organize appropriately for these realities. These factors along with several others account for the growing interest in non-residential programs of higher education such as the Open University, Empire State College, and the University Without Walls.

Briefly some of the other factors at play in this movement are as follows:

1. While the instructional costs of non-residential study may not be less than residential costs and may indeed be more in the developmental stages, many of the non-instructional costs related to caring for large numbers of students in continuous residence will be eliminated.

2. At least for publicly supported institutions, the capability of colleges or universities to relate to the broader aspects of education such as emotional development and growth in personal values is being constantly diminished. So the public institution may be well advised to concentrate primarily on subject matter areas rather than the other aspects of students' growth and development.

Amid the rhetoric about off-campus education, there are substantial and hopefully viable programs and institutions emerging. Some of them are described below.

The Open University

At the new town of Milton Keynes, the British opened The Open University in January, 1971. The idea of The Open University was first broached by Harold Wilson in 1963, and went through several evolutions before it was translated into its present operational form. For the present and near future, it will have no students on campus. The primary mode of instruction is through systematically designed correspondence study packages.[1]

The Open University's BA will be awarded for the completion of six credits, eight for honors. A credit is awarded for satisfactorily completing a course composed of thirty-six weekly units for a foundation course or thirty-four for an upper-level course. Half-credit courses consist of sixteen weekly units. A weekly unit is expected to require an average of ten hours of work. Each weekly unit of instruction is supported by a twenty-five-minute television program and a twenty-five-minute radio program.[2]

A great deal of effort and money have been and will be expended to meet the typical need of correspondence students for peer, tutor, and counselor interaction. Study centers have been established in areas of heavy population concentration using facilities rented from colleges and other institutions. Each center has radio and television receivers, and every telecast is available for replay on video cassettes.[3]

Tutoring classes for foundation courses are conducted regularly. Every center is directed by a counselor who provides consultation on all general matters. Furthermore, every student has his own individual counselor who will probably see him through his entire program.[4]

Though much more could be said about The Open University, suffice it to say that it provides independent study reinforced by tutorial and counseling services without requiring that students leave

their homes and jobs for long periods of residence. By 1973, $12 million will have been invested in facilities and equipment; and its operating budget for 1971 was $15 million, including $3.75 million for the BBC.[5] It has been reported that over $100 million have already been spent in the development of instructional programs.[6]

Empire State College

Empire State College has been established as one of the more than seventy institutions comprising the State University of New York (SUNY). Upon successful completion of a program of study in Empire State, SUNY will award either the AA or BA degree. A "program of study" is composed of several "contracts," "organized around a conceptual framework based on the student's interest, purposes, plans, or aspirations."[7] A contract delineates particular learning activities to be pursued for a specified period of time, typically from one to six months. The learning activities may be in the form of one, or a combination of more than one of the following modes:

1. **Formal courses** offered by colleges, industries, unions, community agencies and organizations other than Empire State.

2. **Cooperative studies** which arise when several students share a similar interest and want to create a group to coordinate activities, share resources and experiences, or create a common outcome.

3. **Tutorials** in which a teacher helps a student pursue a particular area of knowledge or competence.

4. **Organized programs** of more or less self-contained resources, which students use largely on their own, including correspondence courses, programmed learning materials and televised instruction.

5. Direct **experiences,** travel, observations, field work, paid employment, volunteer activities and the like, which may be supervised, and which become the object of examination and reflection by the student.

6. **Independent studies** which usually call for a series of readings and writings, and which may also include direct experiences as described above.[8]

The primary instructional agent for Empire State College will not be a teacher in the usual sense, but a "mentor." The mentor will help students "clarify their purposes, develop a general conceptual framework for program planning, make specific plans for study, and evaluate their progress."[9] The mentor will also tutor students in those parts of a contract where he has the appropriate knowledge and competence.

Eight Area Learning Centers will be strategically placed throughout the state. Centers are already operating in Manhattan and Albany; two are now being developed in Rochester and on Long Island. Each center will be directed by a dean and will have twelve to sixteen mentors. The Coordinating Center is at Saratoga Springs.

Apparently, while all budgets are frozen within SUNY this year, Empire State is being funded to move ahead. It should be noted that SUNY received about $1 million of foundation support to develop Empire State College.

The Regents University (External) Degree Program (New York State)

The Regents University (External) Degree Program of the New York State Department of Education will award undergraduate degrees to candidates whose demonstrated attainments are equivalent to those of a traditional college degree recipient. It is anticipated that the criteria for degrees and the means of their evaluation will be established so that the Associate in Arts degree can be available by late this year and the Bachelor of Business degree by late 1973. The general plan is that the Regents of the University of the State of New York (a part of the State Department of Education) will award the degrees to any who qualify, without regard to age, residence, or method of preparation. This program is built on the philosophy and expertise of New York's College of Proficiency Examination Program.[10] The New York program is being developed with the assistance of a foundation grant of about $8 hundred thousand dollars.

New Jersey's Department of Higher Education plans to do the same thing by developing a program in cooperation with New York's State Department of Education. New Jersey will administer its program through a new college to be known as Thomas A. Edison College.[11]

University of California

The President's Task Force on the Extended University, composed of fifteen faculty members and administrators from the nine campuses of the University of California, has set forth a framework for extending the University's upper division and master's level studies to part-time students. The Task Force suggested that, while existing curricula are appropriate for many part-time students, new curricula ought to be developed around broad aggregations of knowledge more appropriate to the needs and interests of other such students. In any case, the requirements for graduation should be at least as demanding as those for residential students.[12]

In regard to organization, the Task Force's proposal took the following considerations into account:

1. The provision for new sources of initiative in the development of innovative programs.
2. The need to give special attention to the interests of part-time students,
3. The creation of an integral relationship between new and existing programs,
4. The facilitation of both campus and state-wide programs.[13]

In view of these considerations, the Task Force made recommendations for both institutional and system organization for external degree programs. First, the Task Force recommended that a college or division should be designated or created to develop and manage extended degree programs on each campus of the University. That college or division should be coordinated with University Extension and Summer Session.[14]

At the university system level, a consortium should be established to be known as New College. New College would be expected to do the following:

1. Assist in the development of campus-based programs,
2. Do research in all aspects of the various programs,
3. Foster multi-campus cooperation,
4. Offer new degree curricula for those students whose needs, for various reasons, cannot be adequately provided for by campus-based programs,
5. Establish Learning Centers when existing institutional facilities cannot meet particular, continuing needs of part-time students.[15]

Most of the faculty of New College would be drawn from nine campuses, either on joint appointment or temporary leave; there would also be a core of permanent faculty in New College.

Because the students in the extended degree programs would be fully matriculated and making progress toward a University degree, they would be counted in the instructional load of the University, hence carrying regular budgetary support from the state. While it is not expected that the initial costs will be low, and some risk capital will be necessary, such programs in the long run should reveal ways to reduce unit costs for instruction.[16]

The California State Colleges

In general, the California State College system has responded similarly to the University of California. That is, it has established the Commission On External Degree Programs to review the need for such programs and to delineate ways to meet manifest needs. More specifically, the Commission has the following nine responsibilities:

1. Survey and evaluate external degree and certificate programs already in operation, or that are being considered, in other education systems, states, and countries,
2. Consult with nationally recognized leaders of the "external college" movement,
3. Seek, encourage, and evaluate proposals from the faculties of the California State Colleges,
4. Assist the colleges in designing and piloting external degree programs,
5. Monitor and help evaluate pilot projects,
6. Determine the extent to which the need for degree programs for non-resident students can be met by the California State Colleges,
7. Explore, contact, and communicate with funding sources,
8. Conduct surveys to identify needs for and interests in programs of extended education,
9. Make recommendations to the Chancellor on extended education.[17]

University Without Walls

The University Without Walls is a consortium of twenty colleges and universities organized by the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities. Over $800,000 has been given to it for development by the United States Office of Education, the Ford Foundation, and UNESCO.[18] It will be a "university without walls" because it will provide education for people wherever they are––"at work, in their home, through internships, independent study and field experience, within areas of special social problems, at one or more colleges, and in travel and service abroad."[19] The typical college age span is also abandoned for an expanded one of sixteen to sixty. Its faculty will include not only regular college teachers but also knowledgeable people in non-academic pursuits. New approaches and technologies for communication will be freely employed in its instructional processes.

This venture is undertaken by a collection of institutions so that students may take advantage of the different resources of its members. Furthermore, the research and development that must be done to develop effective modes of non-campus-confined study can be centrally funded but equally shared. Finally, a student in the University Without Walls may take his degree in this program either through the institution where he will do most of his work or through the University Without Walls.[20]

The descriptions of the above programs are drawn from several documents. These documents have been used in different ways. In some cases they have been summarized very generally, in others paraphrased, and in still others direct quotes have been used. Footnotes for this section appear at the end of the report.

The Scope of Educational Decision-Making Required in Planning External Degree Programs

Current efforts of colleges and universities to provide external degree programs were reviewed for the purpose of dimensioning the planning problem by identifying the fundamental questions which need to be considered and the major options available for decision-making by those who plan external degree programs. The key questions are: **What kind** of external degree program will be offered **by whom** and **for whom?** How and for what purpose will such a degree be offered? A number of alternatives are available in answer to each of these questions. An outline summary of the questions and options is included in the appendix.

What kinds of external degree programs will be offered?

First, the institutions may elect to offer essentially **the same degree programs as offered on campus** with variations and adaptations to external degree conditions. For instance, the regular curricula might be offered using different systems for delivering instruction and different methods and processes for evaluating student achievement from those used in campus residential study. (This regular curriculum program could be implemented by existing colleges or by a separate college with its own faculty and administration.)

The second option as to the kind of external degrees to be offered is to develop **new and specially designed degrees based on innovative and experimental rationales and curricula approaches.** Such degrees might require the design for new courses with different content, or they could use existing

courses offered in different patterns to implement different rationales. As in the first option, instruction might be provided by regular faculty of the institutions or by different faculty employed for this purpose.

The third option available is simply to **provide both the regular degrees and the specially designed degrees** so that the student can elect the route which best suits his needs.

What level of external degrees will be offered?

The external mode of instruction can be utilized at any level including the **Associate, Baccalaureate, Masters,** and **Doctors** degree. An area of special need may exist for the awarding of **Certificates** which would certify new competencies or majors for those who have already earned degrees at any degree level––associate, baccalaureate, masters, or doctorate.

Who will offer external degrees?

It might be desirable to select a **single institution** to offer external degrees for the University System. The obvious possibility is that **each institution in the University System** could be authorized and encouraged to offer its own external degrees. Two or more of these institutions could form a **coalition** to offer the degree, i.e., one or more junior colleges and a four-year institution. The degree could be offered as a **University System degree,** drawing upon the existing colleges faculties for instruction or employing new faculty for the program. Another possibility would be the **creation of a new college** for the purpose of offering external degrees.

Who will be allowed to study for external degrees?

An early decision must be made as to the target population for any external degree program. Will it be designed and offered for **everyone who is interested and able to do the required work?** Will it be for **adults only?** Will it be restricted to only those **individuals who can demonstrate a superior level of intellect and/or motivation?** Will a **regular** college student be allowed to elect the external degree, or must the **applicant justify his inability to study on campus in regular residential study?**

How will external degree programs of instruction be made available?

The question of how to deliver external degree programs causes less anxiety than the previous questions because it is not necessary to choose one delivery system at the expense, or exclusion, of another. A number of systems for delivering off-campus, or external, instruction are available. They include correspondence study; mass media of television or radio; electronic interconnection for closed circuit television, telephone networks, and computer-oriented instruction; and the use of accessible classrooms, laboratories and other learning centers wherever they may be found. An external degree program will frequently use all of these delivery systems in various combinations. Correspondence study

and certain laboratory arrangements are self-pacing, allowing the individual to proceed in his program at a rate which is comfortable and best suited to him.

The major ways of organizing study for the external degree students include independent study syllabi and assignments, programmed instruction, tutorially directed reading, audio-tutorial, brief campus residence sessions, and combinations of two or more of these.

How will student achievement be assessed and validated?

One of the most difficult problems which must be resolved is that of assessing and validating student achievement. This includes the determination of his levels of knowledge and achievement at entrance into the program as well as validating his achievements as he progresses through the program. Considerable study of the art and experimentation with the various processes now in use will be required. Examples of the methods which are currently used include teacher-designed testing, standardized testing, performance testing, interviews, jury evaluation, project evaluation, and documentation of experiences.

In addition to the difficulty of the validation process itself, there is the additional problem of determining the units which will be used to mark or quantify the validation. Will the quarter or semester hour be used? If so, how are life experiences and achievements gained through means other than higher education to be converted to quarter/semester hours? Does the continuing education unit recently adopted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools offer a possible solution? Should there be broad areas, modules or blocks of competency which can be defined and to which the institutions or validating agency can certify competence? It may be necessary to consider combinations of these units, since students, at entrance, may have completed work which is certified to in quarter hours and also have gained other knowledge and skills through any number of means including travel and on-the-job training.

What is required to develop new, special, or innovative degree programs?

The answer to this question is neither clear nor simple. The design of an innovative external degree program must be constructed, first of all, on the basis of a carefully thought-out rationale which gives direction to the over-all purposes of the program. Such a rationale should advance an organized point-of-view about the nature and needs of man and society, or a selected dimension of their nature and needs, to which higher education can contribute and advance a similarly organized point-of-view about the role and functions of the proposed program of instruction within the total educational structure and process. From such a rationale the over-all objectives of the program can be derived.

Following the development of rationale and statement of broad objectives comes the arduous but challenging job of planning the program of instruction, including, but not limited to, the following activities:

1. Identifying and sequencing the specific and detailed objectives required for the achievement of the broad goals.

2. Identifying, selecting, and sequencing into study units the content and educational experiences needed to achieve the goals.

3. Selecting and/or developing instructional resources and materials needed to support the study units.

4. Developing testing and evaluation systems for assessing achievement in terms of specific and general objectives.

5. Organizing the supporting systems for the promotion, delivery and operation of the instructional program in the external mode.

Forces and Influences Affecting the External Degree

The preceding discussion of the scope of decion-making involved in planning external degree programs is merely indicative of the technical educational planning involved. When we add to these complexities consideration of forces and influences affecting the external degree from the varying perspectives and expectations of both the public and the higher education establishment itself to all of which planning must be responsive, the complexities take a quantum leap. This section will deal with some of these influences in necessarily general terms. No effort in this section is made to weigh the significance or validity of these influences; rather, the section is meant to point to their existence and to urge consideration of their significance and validity in planning and strategy dealing with the external degree.

Egalitarianism

The first, and perhaps most important, influence is the strong egalitarian thrust that has characterized American society. The Jeffersonian ideal of equality of opportunity has influenced strongly the development of public education in the 19th and 20th centuries. Universal educational opportunity at the elementary level was achieved largely in the 19th century and then at the secondary level in the first three decades of the 20th century. The decades since World War II have witnessed a similar development at the higher education level matching the tidal waves of demand with vast expansions of enrollments in existing institutions and the creation of numerous new institutions, particularly the community junior colleges.

The external degree can be and is viewed as a logical extension of this mass movement by providing higher educational opportunity for people whose life situations will not permit them to study residentially on campuses. This force cannot be ignored because it is widely championed both within and outside the educational establishment from the grass roots to the highest levels of position and authority.

This is not to say that this force is unopposed. Throughout the nation's history there have been countervailing forces from the standpoints of both principle and practicality. There are those who contend that formal education is overvalued; that a large percentage of students are either incapable of profiting sufficiently from advanced formal education or are too disinterested to do so and therefore vigorous screening is required so as to limit opportunity to those who will achieve maximally; and that society cannot afford the costs of large-scale higher education. There are numerous adherents of such positions whose points-of-view similarly cannot be ignored.

The idea of life-long learning and continuing education

Adherents of the external degree look at the rapid pace of change in our society, its growing complexity and the explosion of new knowledge. They contend that obsolescence and inadequacy of knowledge and skill are individual threats to the quality of the personal life and a collective threat to the continued strength and vitality of our society. Life-long learning is considered a necessity, not a luxury, and external degree and certificate programs are needed to help adults keep abreast of new knowledge and of major changes in work, living conditions, and public affairs and issues.

Mobility of the population

Other observers point to the mobility of the population and contend that large numbers of adults and youth who cannot afford to go to residence campuses do not live long enough in one community to earn degrees at institutions within commuting distance. The problems of transfer and collection of credits by part-time students from numerous institutions sufficient to meet residence requirements are too often impossible. External degree programs can make it easier for part-time students to earn degrees through a single, coherent program of study regardless of rapid changes in residence.

The needs of the educationally deprived

The needs of the economically, socially, and educationally deprived are a sharp focus of public concern. In a society where higher education is required to open so many doors to occupational, economic, and social advancement, unusual effort is needed to make such opportunities available. Numerous experimental programs have been developed to provide these opportunities. Such efforts have been too few and sporadic to make a real impact. Many see that external degree programs can be made sufficiently flexible and so universally available as to meet the needs of substantial numbers of deprived people who are sufficiently capable and motivated.

Public acceptance of previous efforts to extend higher education opportunity

There has been widespread public acceptance and support of previous movements to extend higher education opportunity. General extension courses, university evening classes, and correspondence courses which collectively enroll nationally up to about 30 percent of all degree-seeking students have become a significant part of the higher education structure. The community junior college and the downtown urban university were both justified initially in major part on the basis that they extended higher education opportunity to so many whose life situations would not permit them to go off to college. Each of these types of institutions is now a major segment of the higher education complex with general public acceptance and support. The external degree program is considered by some as a natural continuation of these movements.

Major advocacy of the external degree by significant policy influencing bodies nationally and internationally

Numerous major studies and reports on higher education in recent years have recommended the development of external degrees or practices of a similar import. Among these are the **Report on Higher Education** by a distinguished task force funded by the Ford Foundation which was transmitted to, published, and disseminated by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in March, 1971; the successive Carnegie Commission Reports with particular reference to **Less Time, More Options, Education Beyond the High School,** January, 1971; and the forthcoming report of the College Entrance Examination Boards Commission on Non-traditional Studies. Added to this is the impact of widely publicized external degree programs funded in part by government and foundation grants both in this country and abroad. All such efforts are attracting attention, provoking discussion, and gaining advocacy.

Dissatisfaction with existing practices in higher education

There are many critics and criticisms of existing higher education programs and practices. Many of those seeking changes and reforms despair of their accomplishment through existing allegedly bureaucratic and protective mechanisms. They see in the external degree program an opportunity, perhaps, to make needed changes and demonstrate their effectiveness. Documentation of these criticisms would be too lengthy to treat in this report. The central point, however, is that one of the major sources of support for the external degree comes from academic and lay critics of higher education as now organized and practiced who will continue their support only if the movement carries with it tangible responsiveness to alleged needs for curricular and instructional reform and renewal.

Threats to current higher education practices posed by the external degree

Support of the external degree by those who would change many established higher education practices automatically threatens large numbers of people on and off campuses who support largely the status quo. The removal of extended residence requirements inherent in the very definition of the external degree, in the eyes of many, strikes at the jugular vein of the central requirement for the maintenance of quality and standards in degree programs. To admit that degrees can be earned off-campus is to imply that campuses as we now know them are not needed. Faculty positions are customarily determined by a combination of instructional hours and the numbers of students taught. Thus departmental, school, and institutional strengths in professional staff are geared largely to delivery of instruction in the traditional class-session mode. Delivery of instruction by external modes threatens the entire process. Strong resistance to the movement both open and covert is therefore inevitable.

The external degree as possibly a more economical way of providing mass higher education opportunity

One of the sources of interest in the external degree lies in the possibility that it may effect savings in the costs of higher education. The large amounts of independent study involved might decrease the amount of instructional time required of faculty. The large-scale use of multi-media such as film, audio, and TV tapes and their mass duplication should greatly reduce the amount of faculty effort

required to lecture and transmit the data of learning. Thus, the argument runs, much smaller numbers of really superior faculty can produce an improved quality of education at substantially lesser costs. The external degree is viewed as a way of implementing the familiar process of equipment displacing man for greater productivity at lesser cost.

Salient Opportunities for Improvement

While the late fifties and sixties witnessed phenomenal growth in American higher education, the seventies may be the decade of improvement and reform. That is, past gains may be secured and consolidated, basic purposes clarified and delimited, and processes refined in terms of effectiveness and economy. While programs of extended education will meet specific and demonstrable needs, they can also be effective in helping to make these necessary reforms and improvements in the certification and instructional processes. Some of the general ways in which programs of extended education can meet genuine public needs and facilitate meaningful reform follow.

Extending the campus

There is reason to believe that a substantial number of people would benefit from non-resident degree programs. Many capable adults want to go to college after high school but are prevented from doing so because of situational problems rather than personal limitations. They usually have family and job constraints that make full-time residential study difficult if not impossible. Efforts to reach such students have long been made through evening courses, particularly in metropolitan areas, and through correspondence study.

The evening programs have essentially taken the traditional classroom to the students. This has been and continues to be an effective way of reaching adults, especially where institutions are located in areas with dense population concentrations. It may be that institutions located in such areas should emphasize reaching the "walk-in" student in their efforts to extend programs to part-time students.

On the other hand, to limit extended education programs to scheduled evening classes and the operation of modest and somewhat peripheral correspondence programs would be to fail to respond to opportunities today that could become pressures later. First, there are a number of people who can study independently if given a well structured program of study. They do not necessarily need to meet in a class several nights a week, and many are prevented from participating by this requirement. Second, many adults have academic competencies acquired through various forms of unconventional study, for which they need validation and credit toward a desired degree. Third, serious students often wish to pursue study that would be judged substantial to academic men but which has not been formulated as a part of a given curriculum; they need the opportunity to develop contract programs of study with an academic mentor and be credited for it when they document their completion of it. A comprehensive extended degree program provides for such contingencies.

While the above observations primarily concern adults, a number of people of typical college age could profit from non-residential programs. Obviously, those young people who have handicaps that make continuous residence impossible would benefit. Beyond that many young people in general either want or need to study and work at the same time; non-residential programs would be appropriate for many of them.

In essence what is being suggested is that a culture as rich as ours in dispersed information will probably find the means to allow people to pursue systematic study wherever they are; but the question is whether higher education will relate to this probability. Non-residential degree programs can do this and, at the same time, preserve and, perhaps, enhance the quality of collegiate education.

Certification of competence and control for quality

Presently in American higher education, there is a tendency to award degrees on the basis of credit received in disparate courses of study more so than in higher education systems in many other countries and more than was done in its own past. Perhaps the effort to provide mass higher education is the primary reason that comprehensive, in-depth assessments of students' attainments across broad areas of knowledge have been substantially replaced by teacher-made, individual course examinations. Whatever the causes, many observers believe that serious efforts for reform and improvement will begin with a commitment to credit attainment regardless of what facilitated it. This will necessitate employing the best of the currently available means of assessing educational achievement as well as encouraging the design of whatever other procedures are needed. The current University System examination in English composition and reading is an example in this regard of what can and should be done on a continuing basis.

With a commitment to credit attainment and with the consequent development of appropriate evaluation systems, there will be greater confidence in college and university degrees and certificates, both within and beyond the academic community. The effect would be the establishment of controls for quality as an intergal, functional part of an institution's regular program. Examining and attesting to attainment would again become a prime function of the faculties. Any serious external degree program will constrain its faculties in this positive direction.

Education in context

The value of a college campus as a respite from a frantic society for reflective thought and intense, free discussion is matched by the value of off-campus learning in the context of work and day-to-day living with its many opportunities for application of ideas and clarification of perspective. So the optimal collegiate program probably provides for both campus and off-campus study. The high repute of engineering co-op programs for producing a high level of applied competence is a case in point. Non-resident programs of instruction can integrate the advantages of both approaches for many students in many curricula. Those already in operation have done so.

Adding to and up-dating competencies

While humanists have long asserted the need for men to continue to learn as their perceptions and interests change and grow, it cannot be said that the structures of present American higher education do much to meet this need. But the humanist argument is now buttressed with economic constraints given a technological society that depends so heavily on expertise. This is accentuated in that such a culture produces new knowledges that must inevitably be translated into personal competencies. Therefore, American education must begin to reshape itself to provide for continuing, adult education that directly facilitates the acquisition of new competencies and up-dates established ones.

A serious approach to non-residential higher education will include not only the typical academic degrees but also broad programs of liberal studies as well as certificate programs for career competencies.

Liberal education as an end

All too often efforts to provide liberal education become nothing more than general education requirements which in turn are perceived by students as arbitrary hurdles to be gotten over, not as important matters within themselves. On the other hand, many adults who are somewhat more settled in terms of livelihood and life style feel a need to explore questions of which they were only dimly aware at eighteen years. A number of the adult, non-residential programs emphasize liberal studies. In fact, their degrees are often known as Bachelors of Liberal Studies, as is the case at Syracuse. So extended degrees may very well be a major avenue of reviving interest in interdisciplinary, liberal studies.

Needs, then a program

Frequently, higher education programs are first established and then search for takers. On the other hand, most non-residential programs in their design are seriously taking into account surveyed needs. In establishing or considering the non-residential approach to college education, the best possible use of "market survey" techniques should be employed to develop a profile of the educational needs that could be so met.

Diversity of age groups

Some observers believe that American campuses have become too much the enclaves of the young. By basing credit more on achievement than exposure, young people could leave the campus to study independently and, upon return, be credited for what they learned rather than penalized for having gotten out of the lock-step. At the same time, adults can immediately be placed at whatever level their assessed competence indicates. Hence the campus would be more permeable, hopefully allowing for a better mix of the age groups. The University Without Walls is deliberately planning for a student body of sixteen to sixty.

Maximizing communications capabilities

It is generally agreed that colleges and universities are not taking maximum advantage of available instructional and communications technologies. The courses developed at the Open University show that instructional programs of high quality can be the result when content and communications specialists work together in their design and production. While traditional, on-campus instruction is effectively resistant to such cooperation, it will be necessary in the development of self-contained units of instruction for remote study. To the extent that these cooperative efforts are successful in non-resident instruction, there will be a tendency to adopt their products as well as this general approach to shaping courses and curricula in regular programs.

A more complete partnership

While the University of California seems to be planning to utilize the capabilities of continuing education and extension services to relate to the educational needs of part-time students, a number of the other programs appear to be rationalized and implemented independently of them. Within the University System of Georgia with its exemplary programs in public services and continuing education, this would be a mistake. In fact, the real opportunity in this state will be to inter-relate academic matters and continuing education in whatever programs of non-residential study are developed. Furthermore, it could be that post-college certificate programs in various professional and technical specialities could turn out to be one of the most significant parts of an extended education program. It will be increasingly important for continuing education to document the competencies that its students acquire. By being associated with an effort to credit attainment somewhat independently of how it is acquired, this would be facilitated.

CONCLUSIONS

This section reports in condensed form the broad conclusions of the subcommittee and its advisory panel.

1. The dimensions of need, the sum total of forces supporting the external degree approach, and the potential values which may be realized through developing and offering external degree programs lead directly to the conclusion that the University System should mount a serious and consistent study and planning effort leading to the development and offering of one or more external degree programs.

2. The nature of the basic questions involved in planning and implementing external degree programs and the variety of options available makes the planning process extremely complex. Add to this the nature of the forces and influences favoring and opposing the development of external degrees and the conclusion is that the strategies and structures for planning and implementing programs must be carefully developed to synthesize interest, to reconcile divergent viewpoints, and to thrust with sufficient force to provide a fair chance for success.

3. The concepts and practices involved in external degree programs are not new to higher education or to the University System. These elements are being practiced successfully now in the University System, but they have never been combined into a full, coherent program on the scale involved in offering an external degree. One of the advisory panel members pointed out the similarity to the moon shots. All of the elements to put a man on the moon were known prior the NASA Program, but it required the gigantic NASA system to put the elements together into the successful Apollo program.

4. The numbers and kinds of people who will enroll in external degree programs is still a matter of conjecture; a recommended market survey as well as a review of the experience with programs

now in operation should throw some light on the question. From the standpoint of available experience and knowledge the following conjectures appear appropriate:

A. Large-scale mass enrollments are not anticipated. Higher education institutions in Georgia are strategically located throughout the state convenient to population centers. Most offer evening programs so that employed adults can earn degrees. The weaker the adult is in scholarly competencies, the greater is the likelihood he will prefer frequent and regular class contacts with oral presentations of information to independent study where he is left more completely to his own resources.

B. Most special and innovative external degree programs seem to appeal to the rarer breed of adults who are highly competent, self-motivating learners who have already achieved a great deal in the non-academic world. These types are usually seeking knowledge and skills they themselves have identified as needed to supplement their already considerable array of competencies.

C. If external degrees are opened to regular, college-age students as an alternative, a similar response is anticipated; the great bulk of students will prefer the traditional classroom approach with the more motivated, self-directed, self-pacing learners choosing the external degree option.

5. Any external degree planned and offered should maintain and, if possible, enhance **quality** standards. By standards of quality is meant those provisions that insure that programs as a whole and each constitutent element therein provide for and measure the achievement of the learnings that are specified in the design. Long-range potentials of the external degree will be doomed if makeshift and cheapened programs are offered under its banner.

6. Successful planning and implementation of an external degree program will require in-put from a wide variety of resource people and specialists. Included among these are: representatives of consumers of such programs, i.e., students or adults; representatives of the general public such as Regents, businessmen, the professionals, government officials, and the like; consultants from outside the University System, particularly from those involved in external degree programs which are already underway; and specialists from inside the University System, such as faculty members from the major areas of human knowledge, admissions and records specialists, learning psychologists, learning materials specialists, fiscal experts, testing and guiding specialists, academic administrators, media specialists, adult and continuing education specialists, instructional design specialists, and public relations experts.

7. The external degree program should not be advocated on the basis of being less costly than residential programs. There is insufficient experience to make such a determination. There will be differences in costs of various aspects of the programs, but there is little, if any, basis for expecting overall costs to differ substantially.

For example, in the early stages of program development the costs for external degrees may be high, since much faculty time and effort will be required to develop the courses of instruction using external approaches such as independent study guides, films, tapes, home laboratory experiments, and the like. In the later stages, however, when enrollments grow sufficiently to capitalize on economies of scale and when full use of print and media materials are achieved, real economies may be realized. The assessment and evaluation function, on the other hand, may be costly. There is real hope, however, that in terms of productivity of outcomes versus units of in-put, greater efficiency can emerge.

FOOTNOTES

1 Stanley Maclure, "England's Open University: Revolution at Milton Keynes." **Change,** March–April, 1971, pp. 62–63.

2 Roger D. Harrison, "The Instructional System." In: **Symposium: The Open University––A Case Study in Educational Technology,** pp. 48 and 50. (This copy was sent from a member of The Open University; the copy contained no further identifying information, such as where or when the symposium was held.)

3 **Ibid.,** pp. 59 and 60.

4 **Ibid.,** p. 60.

5 John Walsh, "The Open University: Breakthrough for Britain?" **Science,** Vol. 174, 1971, pp. 675–676.

6 **NUEA Newsletter** (National University Extension Association), Vol. 4(16), August 13, 1971, p. 1.

7 **Empire State College––Interim Report, 1971–1972,** Appendix C, p. 1.

8 **Ibid.**

9 **Ibid.,** Appendix C, p. 3.

10 "Regent's External Degrees: Expanding Educational Opportunities for the Independent Learner" (One page document on the letterhead of the Director of the Division of Independent Study, The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department).

11 "Planning Document for an External Degree Program in the State of New Jersey," Department of Higher Education, State of New Jersey, December, 1971.

12 **Degree Programs for the Part-time Student: A Proposal** (A report of the President's Task Force on the Extended University), University of California, November, 1971, pp. ix–2.

13 **Ibid.,** p. xii.

14 **Ibid.**

15 **Ibid.**

16 **Ibid.**

17 **External Programs Leading to Degrees and Professional Certificates** (An Overview of Activities of the Commission on the External Degree Programs). The Commission on External Degree Programs, The California State College, November, 1971.

18 **University Without Walls** (Summary Statement: A Proposal for an Experimental Degree Program in Undergraduate Education). Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, July, 1971.

19 **Ibid.**

20 **Ibid.**

APPENDIX

PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW OF KEY QUESTIONS INVOLVED IN PLANNING EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAMS AND SOME OF THE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED--NOTES FROM A CONSULTATION OF AN AD HOC COMMITTEE

I. What kinds of external degree programs can be offered? Options:

A. Essentially the same degree programs as offered on-campus with variations and adaptations to external degree conditions.

(1) Regular curricula using delivery systems and instructional and evaluation processes different from those used in campus residential study.
(2) Regular curricula but implemented by a separate college with its own faculty and administration.
(3) Combination of the preceding.

B. Specially designed degrees based on different (innovative, experimental) rationales and curricula approaches from those used in existing campus degree programs.

(1) Existing courses used patterned differently to implement different rationales.
(2) Course design and content different from residential courses but taught by resident faculty.
(3) Innovative courses designed and taught by a separate faculty employed for the purpose.
(4) Innovative courses designed and implemented by present institutional personnel and administered through existing institutional structures.

C. Concurrent use of options A and B preceding, thus providing double-track external degree routes.

II. Who shall offer the degrees? Options:

A. A single institution.

B. Any institution in a coalition for the offering of external degrees.

C. University System degree

III. What broad conditions should govern admission to an external degree program? Options:

A. Any high school graduate

B. A specified age––21, 25, or 26

C. Adequate justification for choosing the external degree program instead of regular residence study

D. Evaluation of readiness to enter the program through testing, transcripts of previous study and other means; place in programs at level of demonstrated competency

E. Combination of preceding

F. No entrance requirement

IV. What levels of degrees should be offered? Options:

A. Associate

B. Baccalaureate

C. Masters

D. Certificates for specially designed majors at whatever level of degree has already been earned––baccalaureate, masters, or doctorate––to certify competency in an additional specialty

E. A combination of the preceding

V. What are the major systems for delivering instruction to external students? Options:

A. Correspondence (by mail) self-pacing

B. Mass media of TV and Radio––mass-pacing

C. Accessible classrooms and laboratories on- and off-campus; class-pacing and self-pacing

D. Combinations of preceding

VI. What are the major ways of organizing study for external students? Options:

A. Independent study syllabi and assignments

B. Programmed instruction

C. Tutorially directed reading

D. Audio-tutorial

E. Instructional Resource Center Labs

F. Periodic brief campus residence sessions

G. Combinations of preceding

VII. What are the methods for validating achievements? Options:

A. Teacher-designed testing

B. Standardized testing

C. Performance testing

D. Evaluation center validation

E. Jury evaluation

F. Objective testing

G. Essay exams

H. Project evaluation

I. Documentation of experience

J. Combinations of preceding

VIII. What are the units of achievement to be validated? Options:

A. Quarter/semester hour credits

B. Continuing education unit credits

C. Modules or blocks of competency certification

D. Combinations of preceding